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NEW ORLEANS, August 1.—The
lynching of the five Italians at Tallu-
lah, La., and the ordering away of the
other Italians in Madison parish may
temporarily check the Italian immigra-
tion into North Louisiana and thereby
interrupt a movement which is having
an extraordinary influence on Louisi-
ana and promises to hasten a solution
of the color, or race, question. The in-
terruption, though, is likely to be only
temporary.

The Italians seem to be the only
race that can labor successfully and
compete with the negro in the semi-
tropical climate of Louisiana. They
have been arriving for the last twenty
years at the rate of many thousands
each year, and the census soon to be
taken will show that largely because
of this immigration districts and par-
ishes which formerly had a large ma-
jority of negroes are now white. Among
these are Plaquemine, Assump-
tion, Terrebonne, Iberia and St. John.
The Italian immigration has naturally
been largest in Southern Louisiana in
the territory around New Orleans, where
there is already a large Latin popu-
lation. Thence it has spread into the
northern parishes, where it has met with
a far from hearty welcome; but the
Italians seem to have the patience and
perseverance of the Chinese, enduring
persecution and overcoming prejudice
by mere persistence.

No better evidence could be present-
ed of this triumph over bitter prej-
udice than is found right here in New
Orleans. The Parish prison lynching
of eight years ago was a blow from
which many thought the Italian colony
of New Orleans would never recover.
Perhaps 6,000 or 8,000 Italians left New
Orleans then, seeing no hope or future
for themselves here and settled in
Memphis, St. Louis, Chicago and at
other points. But the Italians have
lived down the Hennessy assassination
and the discredit of the Mafia, and
have more than regained their former
position. The Italian colony of New
Orleans has doubled in numbers since
the Parish prison lynching affair, and
in wealth and standing has advanced
far more. It has taken the first place
among the foreign population of New
Orleans. There are now two daily Italian
papers in New Orleans, and Signor
Enrico Cavalli, the editor of one of
them, the Italo-Americano, is the repre-
sentative appointed by the Italian
Government to investigate the Tallu-
lah lynching. Schools have been estab-
lished, at which the Italians are taught
the English language, but their mother
tongue, and King Humbert, through
the Italian Consul, has contributed lib-
erally to the support of these schools,
which keep alive a love for Italy in the
hearts of its sons.

The status of the Italians has been
very much improved of late. They
dropped the hand organ long ago, and
they never took to barbering, shoe-
cleaning or street work, as in New
York. From cobbling they have
branched out into the manufacture of
shoes, and they control some of the
largest factories in the South. The
fruit, vegetable and fish trades they
have absolutely controlled since they
first came, for they are without rivals
in peddling. They are rapidly crowd-
ing into the corner grocery business,
formerly monopolized by Irishmen and
Germans, and into nearly all lines,
even the learned professions. Latterly
they have been quite conspicuous in
politics.

It is, however, in the country dis-
tricts that the Italians are making
themselves most felt. Three-fourths
of the Italian immigrants are from
Naples or Sicily. They are peasants,
accustomed to farm work, and they
come over here to work on the sugar
plantations. They come from limited
areas even in Sicily and Naples. The
little town of Contessa Entellina, for
instance, has more of its citizens in
Louisiana than at home; and Cefalu,
from which came all the men lynched
in Madison parish the other day, has
seen the exodus of its sons and daugh-
ters in Louisiana. The immigrants are
with rare exceptions a hardy, robust
race, willing to work and impervious
to the climate. The Immigration Com-
missioner at this port declares that
the character of the Italians arriving is
steadily improving. They find work
the day they arrive. Some come over
in the summer, work through the
grinding season, when wages are high,
and return to Italy in the winter with
their earnings; but this practice is dy-
ing out and a majority of the immi-
grants come to stay, learn English, or
something like English, as soon as they
can, and apply for naturalization pa-
pers. Not a few adopt English names
like Brown, Smith or Jones, in order
to be thorough Americans. They doff
their picturesque costumes within a
week of their arrival and pick up a
cheap imitation of American dress.

They make good laborers and give
perfect satisfaction to the planters,
being infinitely superior to the ne-
groes. The Louisiana planters have
been for years trying to get some sub-
stitute for the negroes, who are not
trustworthy. The Italians come near-
est to fulfilling all conditions. They
are well satisfied with their wages and
save money where the negro cannot.
They do not drink, and cause little
trouble. They are willing to live in
the same cabins as the negroes and to
work with them in the fields on equal
terms, and they work hard and faith-

fully. They have, therefore, given sat-
isfaction and are rapidly crowding the
negro back from the sugar district. In
all the districts immediately around
New Orleans, where the negro fur-
nished nine-tenths of the labor ten
years ago, the Italians are in a ma-
jority today. New Orleans was a white
oasis in the midst of a population over-
whelmingly negro at the last census;
the new enumeration will show that
Plaquemine and St. Bernard below,
Jefferson and St. John above, Terre-
bonne, Lafourche, Iberia and St. Mar-
tin's on the west have become white;
that is, have a majority of white popu-
lation—thanks to the immigration of
the Italians and the rapid increase of
the Acadhans (brethren of Evangeline),
the two races which are doing the most
to support the Southern theory of
"white supremacy," but who are looked
down on with contempt by the Ameri-
cans, the creoles and the other white
races.

The position of the Italian in Louisi-
ana is very anomalous because of the
race, or, rather, the negro, question.
Neither the whites nor the negroes
know how to class him—he is, as it
were, a link connecting the white and
black races. Swarthy in color, the
Sicilians are darker than the griffes
and quadroons, the negro half-breeds
of Southern Louisiana, but they are
undoubtedly white. On the other hand,
they are willing to live in the same
quarters with the negroes and to work
side by side with them, and seem whol-
ly destitute of that anti-negro preju-
dice which is one of the distinguishing
features of all the white races in the
South. It cannot be said that this at-
titude of the Sicilians toward the negro
has won his gratitude. He looks upon
the Italian with pretty much the same
feeling as he entertained of old toward
the poor white trash. He has no re-
spect for the Italian and refuses to
treat him with the respect and defer-
ence shown to other white men. He
will not take off his hat to him or call
him "Mister," a word which is never
applied under any circumstances to the
negro in the South, even when Col-
onel and Judge are used, and which the
negro always uses of the whites.

It is the same with the whites. The
average man will classify the popula-
tion as whites, dagoes and negroes.
This is the explanation of the lynching
of Italians in Louisiana. Not 99
per cent but 100 per cent of the white
men lynched in this State have been
Italians. There have been wholesale
Italian lynchings in New Orleans, St.
Charles, St. John and Madison. The
unwritten law of the South is that a
white man shall not be lynched. No
matter what his crime, he is entitled to
trial by law and a legal execution.
The only exception is the Italian, who,
in this respect has been placed on terms
of equality with the negro. If the Ital-
ian kills a white man; that is, a non-
Italian, he is likely to be lynched for it.

This rule has prevailed in all parts
of the State. As long as the Italians
in New Orleans confined their killings
to their own race no special attention
was paid to the matter. When, how-
ever, they killed an American, the
Chief of Police, Hennessy, eleven years
lynched. It should be said, by the way,
that the excuse given by the Italians
for the Hennessy assassination was
that he interfered in an Italian quar-
rel. The Provenzanos and Matrangas
had quarreled and declared a vendetta
against each other. Hennessy, who
was a friend of the Provenzanos, inter-
fered, bringing himself, so the Italian
assassins said, under the Italian ven-
detta code. It was the same in St.
John the Baptist, where the killing of
a creole by an Italian resulted in the
lynching of all the Italians in the
parish jail; while in Madison the mere
assault on Dr. Hodge was considered
good ground for wholesale lynching.
Perhaps the situation there was never
better exemplified than in the inter-
views with leading citizens of Madison,
who declared that the hanging of the
Italian prisoners was necessary in the
interest of "white supremacy," al-
though just where "white supremacy,"
the battery of the North Louisiana
Anglo-Saxons, was involved in the kill-
ing of white men by other white men,
it is difficult to explain.

In the matter of law and order there
has been a marked improvement
among the Italians. If the Mafia ever
existed, it is thoroughly dead now. It
was believed in by the Italians them-
selves, and many of the better class
paid blackmail to those who used the
name of Mafia to frighten them with.
The vendetta prevails among the new-
ly arrived immigrants, but they soon
drop it and go to law to settle their dis-
putes. Formerly it was considered dis-
honorable and cowardly for a Sicilian
to testify in a court against an oppres-
sor; but now all do so. The amount
of crime among them is small and is
decreasing. Their worst weakness is
the hereditary tendency to take im-
mediate vengeance for a wrong with the
knife, pistol or the shotgun. In the
second generation the Italian-American
is an American, industrious, progress-
ive and public-spirited.

Such is the race which now consti-
tutes the largest foreign element in the
population of Louisiana, and offers the
State the best assurance that it will
not become a second Africa, like the
coast country of South Carolina. It has
been difficult to get white immigrants
to settle in the bottom lands of the
Mississippi. Other foreigners will not
come. They fear the heat and the ma-
laria. The men from the North and
West who have lately come into Louisi-
ana have, without exception, settled in
the pinelands or prairies. The white
immigration into the rich alluvial
lands of the Lafourche, Teche, Atcha-
falaya and Mississippi, the delta of the
great river, has been nearly wholly
Italian. It has fared well there and in-
creased, and it is rapidly substituting
white for negro labor, and accomplish-
ing results that would have been im-
possible in any other way. In spite of
the prejudices that exist, the mob out-
breaks and the lynchings, the Italian
is rapidly solving the negro problem
in Louisiana. If the immigration from
Italy keeps up, the Italian element will
in time be preponderating in many
parts of Louisiana. Outrages like that
at Madison prove only a temporary
check to this population movement.
There are many who do not like the

change from the old times and object
to these modern Latins, but consider-
ing the rapidly with which the prej-
udice against them has weakened in the
last few years, it is probable that it
will have completely disappeared in
another decade.

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